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A LOOK AT FOREIGN LANGUAGE PLACEMENT, 1963-1967.

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DATA WAS COMPILED FROM ENTERING STUDENTS TESTED DURING THE FALL QUARTERS OF 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, AND 1967, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, IN ORDER TO DETERMINE WHETHER HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATION (IN FRENCH, GERMAN, AND SPANISH) HAD INCREASED OVER THE 5-YEAR PERIOD AND WHETHER STUDENT PLACEMENT IN UNIVERSITY COURSES HAD SHIFTED SYSTEMATICALLY. ALTHOUGH TWO YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATION WAS THE CONTINUOUS NORM, THERE WAS A SHARP AND CONSISTENT PERCENT INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS WITH 4 YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL LANGUAGE STUDY (THOUGH THIS GROUP STILL REMAINS A SMALL PERCENT OF THE TOTAL SAMPLE). DESPITE PLACEMENT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YEARS, DATA SHOW THAT HIGH SCHOOL PREPARATION AND LENGTH OF DELAY (BETWEEN PREPARATION AND COLLEGE STUDY) GREATLY INFLUENCE THE AMOUNT OF UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE STUDY AN ENTERING STUDENT MAY EXPECT TO FACE. GERMAN STUDENTS TRADITIONALLY PLACED LOWER IN THE SEQUENCE OF COURSES THAN FRENCH OR SPANISH STUDENTS. (AF)

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A Look at Foreign Language Placement: 1963-1967

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Foreign language placement testing began at the University of Washington in the fall of 1963. During the past four years a considerable amount of experimentation with methods of placing entering students in University courses in French, German, and Spanish has taken place. This paper has compiled data from students tested during the fall quarters of 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, and 1967 to determine whether (a) the amount of high school preparation in French, German, and Spanish has substantially increased over the five-year period, and whether (b) the placement of these students in University courses has shown any systematic shifts.

Table 1 shows by year the percentages tested in each language having one, two, three, or four years of high school study subdivided by length of delay. Students studying the tested language in the twelfth grade were classified as non-delays. All others were defined as delays. Students having previous college study in the tested language as well as those having an odd number of high school semesters of language study were not included. Table 1 data clearly reveal the prominence of the two-year group in each language; about 50 per cent of the sample had only two years of high school language study and a majority had experienced delays. There appears to be no

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discernible tendency for this group to shrink in size over the time period covered. There has, however, been a sharp and consistent percentage increase in the proportion having four years of high school study. But this group still comprises a rather small percentage of the total sample; only 10 per cent of the German students and less than 25 per cent of the French and Spanish students had four years of high school preparation in 1967.

Table 2, 3, and 4 show the percentages placed at each of the seven course levels from 1963 to 1967 for French, German, and Spanish, respectively. They are subdivided by years of high school study and length of delay. The percentages placed at a given course level from year to year are frequently disparate. This is primarily attributable to different methods of placement that have evolved since 1963 as well as the inherent difficulties in adding tests and changing from one test to another without being able to accurately equate performances on the two tests. The placement data for 1964 are a case in point. Students were placed at much higher levels in 1964 than in 1963 to avoid placing so many students in non-credit courses. This approach was abandoned the following year because a great many students reportedly were placed in courses that were too difficult.

Despite placement differences between years, it is obvious from these data that high school preparation and length of delay greatly influence the amount of University language study an entering student may expect to face.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 furnish a pictorial representation of language placement in French, German, and Spanish, respectively. The bar charts show the percentage assigned to each of the seven placement levels for the total group by language, pooling data from all five years. For each of the six categorizations (by years of high school study and length of delay, omitting

the one-year group because of small numbers) mean placement scores were computed by assigning a score of 1 to 101, 2 to 102, 3 to 103, 4 to 201, 5 to 202, 6 to 203 (222), and 7 to 203A (222A). At the right of each chart are the mean scores for the six groups and arrows indicating mean positions on the scale for each group.

As shown in Figure 1, students with two years of high school French and a delay attain a mean score of 2.4, signifying that the typical student in this group has been placed almost halfway between 102 and 103. An average student with four years of high school French and no delay, by comparison, has a mean placement score of 5.8, which falls just short of placement into 222.

As seen in Figure 2, German students have traditionally been placed much lower in the sequence of courses than those taking French or Spanish. More than one-fourth of the German students tested were placed in 101.

Table 1

Percentages of entering students taking foreign language placement examinations classified by number of years of high school study and length of delay for the years 1963-67

FRENCH

	1 Year HS Study			2 Years HS Study			3 Years HS Study			4 Years HS Study			
		No			No			No			No		
Year	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	N
1963	3.5	2.1	5.6	38.4	22.1	60.5	13.2	9.8	23.0	2.2	8.7	11.0	630
1964	1.5	1.2	2.7	34.4	15.5	49.8	19.0	13.2	32.3	3.0	12.2	15.2	809
1965	2.1	1.7	3.8	27.8	18.0	45.8	18.4	10.9	29.4	3.0	18.1	21.1	906
1966	1.6	1.4	3.0	33.4	14.5	46.4	18.1	10.5	28.6	5.7	16.3	22.0	933
1967	2.1	1.0	3.1	34.1	11.9	46.0	18.7	8.3	27.0	7.3	16.6	23.9	1085

GERMAN

	1 Year HS Study			2 Years HS Study			3 Years HS Study			4 Years HS Study			
		No			No			No			No		
Year	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	N
1963	3.3	5.1	8.5	36.6	26.0	62.5	8.5	17.8	26.3	0.3	2.4	2.7	331
1964	3.4	4.7	8.1	35.2	32.5	67.7	5.9	14.0	20.0	1.0	3.2	4.2	406
1965	3.4	4.1	7.5	35.9	28.4	64.3	8.3	14.5	22.9	1.1	4.3	5.3	468
1966	2.7	1.7	4.4	34.9	24.1	58.9	12.0	17.0	29.1	1.0	6.7	7.6	523
1967	3.4	3.7	7.2	32.3	22.1	54.4	13.2	15.2	28.5	2.8	7.2	10.0	645

SPANISH

	1 Year HS Study			2 Years HS Study			3 Years HS Study			4 Years HS Study			
		No			No			No			No		
Year	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	Delay	Delay	Total	N
1963	2.6	1.2	3.9	47.0	12.4	59.5	19.6	6.1	25.6	3.6	7.5	11.0	644
1964	0.7	1.1	1.9	40.5	12.2	52.6	22.5	8.0	30.5	3.6	11.4	15.0	699
1965	1.2	1.3	2.5	30.1	14.4	44.5	23.7	8.4	32.1	4.1	16.8	21.0	773
1966	1.7	0.9	2.6	38.8	11.4	50.2	21.9	5.9	27.8	4.5	14.9	19.4	874
1967	2.9	0.9	3.7	40.2	9.7	49.8	17.5	5.6	23.1	7.4	16.0	23.4	911

Table 2

Percentages of entering students taking the French placement examination who were placed at different course levels classified by number of years of high school study and length of delay for the years 1963-67*

2 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	15	3	17	18	25
102	24	47	51	50	43
103	33	31	33	24	24
201	27	16	20	6	5
202	0	0	9	1	2
222	0	0	7	1	0
222A	1	4	3	0	1
N	242	278	252	302	370

2 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	3	0	3	5	5
102	20	18	25	24	27
103	25	26	33	34	37
201	46	48	20	24	18
202	0	0	9	5	7
222	0	0	7	5	5
222A	6	8	3	2	2
	139	125	162	131	129

3 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	4	1	2	2	1
102	1	6	16	23	22
103	24	19	39	33	37
201	1	19	19	26	21
202	28	34	13	10	11
222	35	8	6	2	4
222A	7	13	5	5	3
N	83	154	166	169	203

3 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	0	0	0	0	1
102	0	0	2	8	6
103	2	6	22	19	19
201	5	10	21	31	26
202	23	25	19	15	26
222	52	23	17	17	14
222A	19	36	18	10	9
	62	107	99	96	90

4 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	14	0	0	0	0
102	7	0	11	8	9
103	7	8	7	19	23
201	7	13	11	21	25
202	0	8	22	19	18
222	36	4	15	15	17
222A	29	67	33	19	9
N	14	24	27	53	79

4 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	0	0	0	0	2
102	4	0	0	1	1
103	0	3	6	7	5
201	7	3	11	15	13
202	20	20	15	22	21
222	33	5	25	22	19
222A	36	69	43	33	40
	55	99	164	152	180

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole per cent. Percentages in each column for each block add to 100 except for rounding errors. N's below each column refer to the total number of cases from which percentages for that column are computed.

Table 3

Percentages of entering students taking the German placement examination who were placed at different course levels classified by number of years of high school study and length of delay for the years 1963-67*

2 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	59	1	52	31	74
102	18	34	16	45	19
103	11	22	21	15	6
201	8	42	6	5	1
202	0	0	2	0	0
203	0	0	2	0	0
203A	3	0	2	3	1
N	120	143	168	182	208

2 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	35	2	34	14	43
102	24	14	14	26	25
103	24	14	17	31	20
201	14	70	12	26	11
202	0	0	14	0	0
203	0	0	5	0	0
203A	2	0	4	2	1
	86	132	133	126	142

3 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	0	4	21	6	35
102	36	0	13	18	24
103	25	13	28	27	12
201	14	29	8	18	18
202	7	29	15	10	5
203	14	25	13	8	6
203A	4	0	3	14	1
N	28	24	39	62	85

3 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	3	0	3	3	10
102	14	4	10	14	25
103	33	9	13	16	21
201	17	4	13	30	19
202	10	28	26	19	10
203	16	56	22	10	10
203A	7	0	12	8	4
	58	57	68	89	98

4 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	0	0	0	40	6
102	0	0	20	0	50
103	0	0	0	0	11
201	0	0	20	0	22
202	100	0	60	20	6
203	0	100	0	0	0
203A	0	0	0	40	6
N	1	4	5	5	18

4 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	0	0	5	0	2
102	0	0	5	3	22
103	38	8	0	14	22
201	13	0	5	14	15
202	38	23	55	29	24
203	13	69	25	11	11
203A	0	0	5	29	4
	8	13	20	35	46

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole per cent. Percentages in each column for each block add to 100 except for rounding errors. N's below each column refer to the total number of cases from which percentages for that column are computed.

Table 4

Percentages of entering students taking the Spanish placement examination who were placed at different course levels classified by number of years of high school study and length of delay for the years 1963-67*

2 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	19	0	5	15	18
102	32	17	57	57	56
103	22	40	22	20	19
201	27	41	10	4	5
202	0	0	5	2	1
203	0	0	1	1	0
203A	1	1	0	1	1
N	302	283	233	338	366

2 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	14	0	3	8	5
102	17	8	31	38	44
103	33	26	28	23	28
201	37	64	25	16	13
202	0	0	9	10	7
203	0	0	4	2	0
203A	0	2	1	4	3
	79	85	111	102	88

3 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	7	0	1	6	2
102	13	2	8	20	25
103	2	7	14	27	31
201	14	8	32	20	20
202	23	57	24	18	12
203	38	19	7	2	1
203A	2	7	15	7	9
N	126	157	183	171	159

3 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	0	0	0	0	4
102	0	0	15	19	14
103	0	4	11	12	24
201	13	9	14	17	22
202	41	59	23	35	16
203	41	14	12	6	0
203A	5	14	25	12	22
	39	56	65	54	51

4 Years with a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	0	0	0	3	8
102	4	0	3	3	12
103	0	4	6	5	10
201	0	4	13	10	10
202	17	24	16	21	24
203	70	36	6	3	12
203A	9	32	56	56	24
N	23	25	32	39	67

4 Years without a Delay

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
101	2	0	0	0	0
102	2	1	0	1	2
103	0	1	2	5	6
201	10	1	7	8	14
202	10	21	12	17	24
203	40	23	7	9	3
203A	35	53	72	61	51
	48	80	130	130	146

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole per cent. Pereentages in each column for each block add to 100 except for rounding errors.. N's below each column refer to the total number of cases from which percentages for that column are computed.

Figure 1. Bar chart comparisons of percentages of French students placed at the seven course levels for the total sample; mean placement scores for the six groups defined by high school study and length of delay.

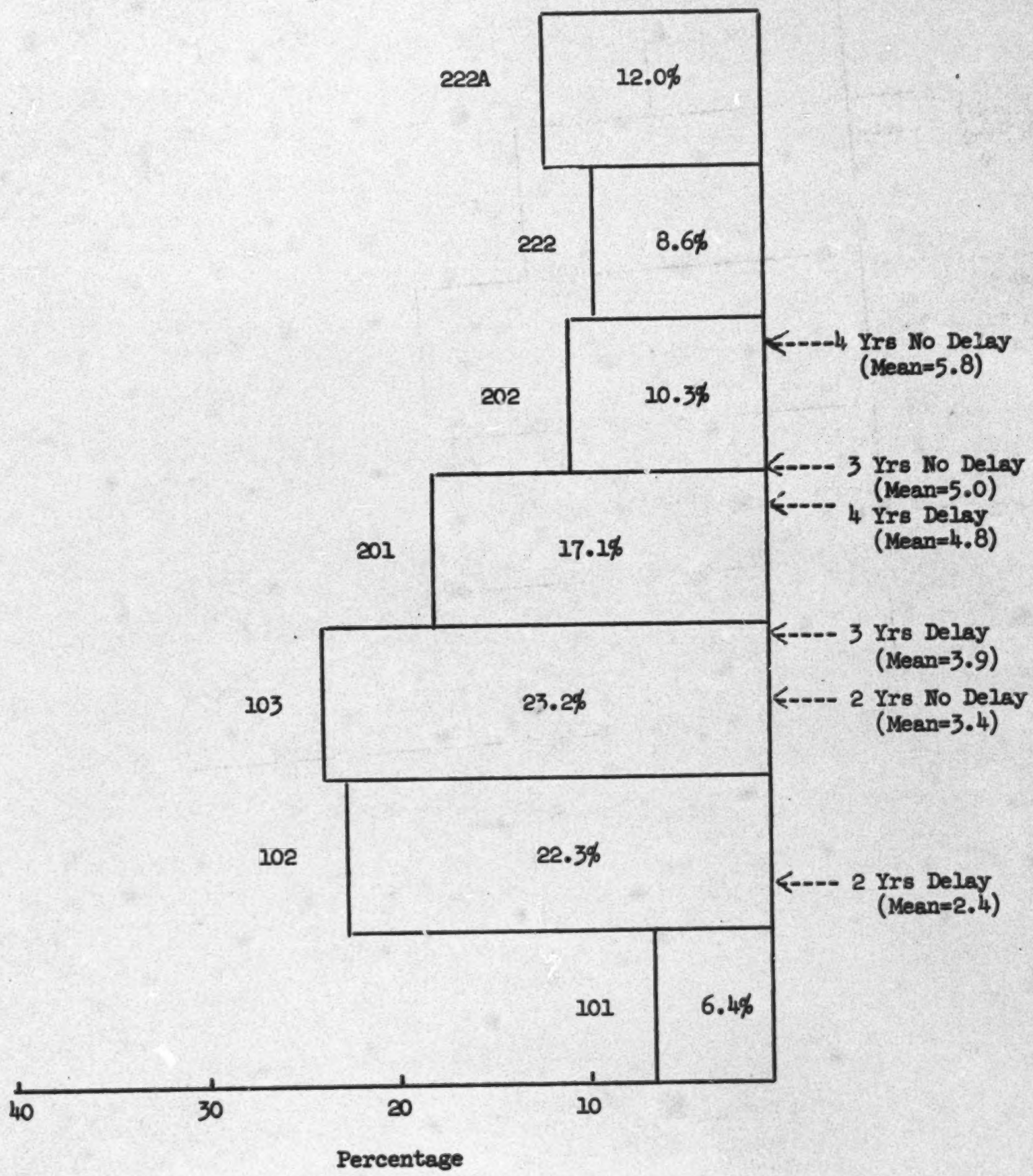


Figure 2. Bar chart comparisons of percentages of German students placed at the seven course levels for the total sample; mean placement scores for the six groups defined by high school study and length of delay.

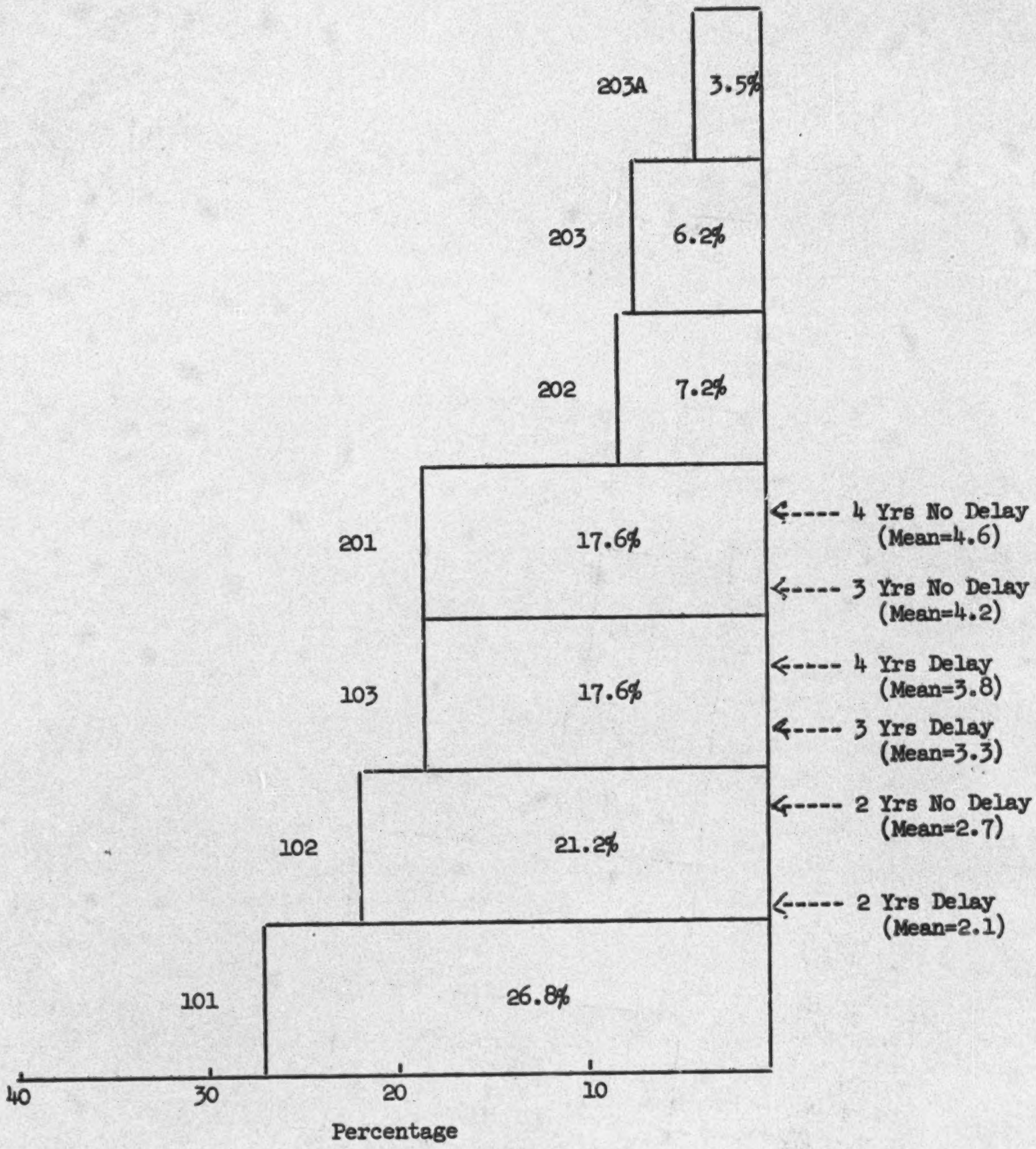
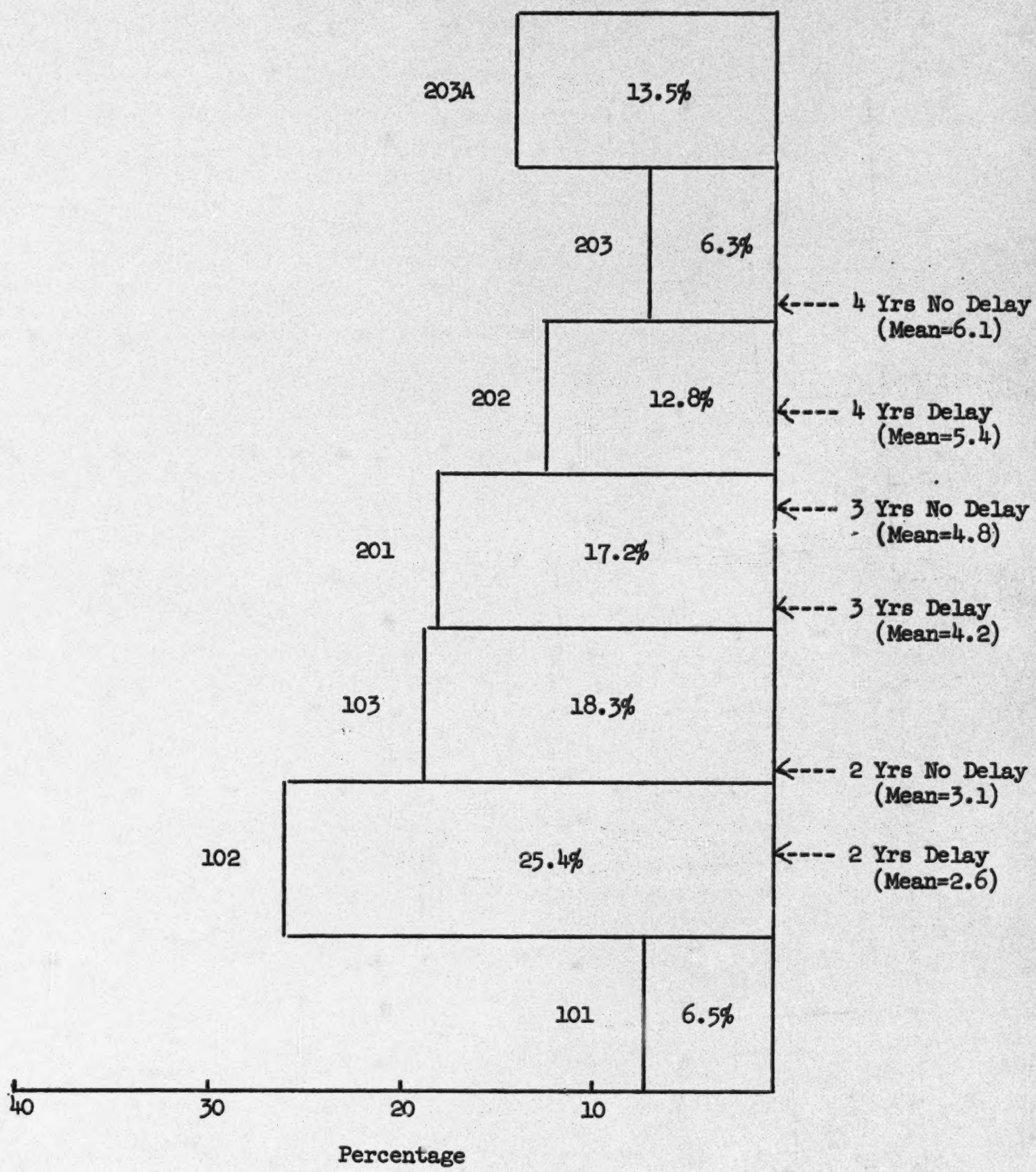


Figure 3. Bar chart comparisons of percentages of Spanish students placed at the seven course levels for the total sample; mean placement scores for the six groups defined by high school study and length of delay.



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